

1947

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The Iowa Homemaker

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Recommended Citation

The Iowa Homemaker (1947) "The Nation's First Home Economics School Reviews 75 Years of Progress," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 27 : No. 4 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol27/iss4/2>

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The Nation's First Home Economics School

Reviews 75 Years of

HOUSEKEEPING lectures in the basement of Old Main made up the first course in science with practice for the kitchen. From this start came today's Division of Home Economics.

Women had been attending Iowa State for 5 years when in 1872 Mrs. Mary B. Welch, wife of the president of the college, began a series of lectures for juniors. This was the first course in home economics at any land grant college in the country and was a part of the Division of Science as Related to Industries. Mrs. Welch had gained teaching experience from managing her own home and from attending a school of cookery in New York City. She then went to the London Kensington Cookery School, where young women were prepared for service in wealthy homes.

Mrs. Welch returned to begin actual class work in two small basement rooms next to the dining room of Old Main, the only college building at that time. No laboratory space was available. This handicap was overcome by Mrs. Welch's plan that students work 2½ hours a day either in the college dining room, kitchen, bakery or laundry.

Four years later an experimental kitchen for class use was opened in the basement of the Old Main Building. As far as it is known, it was the first kitchen of its kind in the country. The textbook was a cookbook Mrs. Welch had written herself.

In 1881 the Department of Domestic Economy moved. It still had only two small basement rooms,

in South Hall, a brick building which stood south of the Campanile.

Poor health forced Mrs. Welch to resign in 1884 and Mrs. Emma P. Ewing, who had conducted the Chicago Training School of Cookery, was named her successor. Mrs. Ewing had gained a national reputation teaching housekeeping to wealthy Southern women who were left without slave help after the Civil War.

During the first year of Mrs. Ewing's administration, the 2-year domestic economy course was replaced with a 4-year course. Two women received master of domestic economy degrees under a graduate program adopted at the same time.

\$400 for Furnishings

Mrs. Ewing was soon asking for all of South Hall for the growing department. The request was granted and \$400 appropriated for furnishings and equipment. Cooking classes moved into the Old Main kitchen where meal planning and institution management courses were practiced. Domestic chemistry began a part of the curriculum for domestic economy students.

Mrs. Eliza Owens was selected by the trustees to replace Mrs. Ewing in 1888. Mrs. Owens followed the teaching method of "learn by doing." Senior women in her classes served a turkey dinner to the Board of Trustees and a series of dinners with senior men as guests.

Gertrude Coburn headed the department from 1896 to 1900, assisted by Mrs. Irving Smith. They furnished new domestic economy rooms on the second floor of North Hall, which was located near the present Home Economics Building. In 1898, 12 were graduated from the "Ladies Course."

Influence of the Women's Federated Clubs turned interest to home economics training for high school girls at the turn of the century. To meet this need, Mary A. Sabin, head of department from 1901 to 1903, organized a 2-year normal course in domestic science. Three years later a 4-year course was added. In 1901, Domestic Economy became Domestic Science and Art. Sewing rooms, a kitchen laboratory, dining rooms and an office were made available when Margaret Hall, first residence hall for women, was opened.

First Practice Teaching

An Iowa State graduate of 1902, Alice Merritt Parks headed the department a year after Miss Sabin resigned because of ill health. During this term, the first practice teaching class of four senior women used faculty members' children for their pupils.

Georgetta Witter Walters came from California to head the department from 1904 to 1907. Mrs. Walters made 2 years of chemistry and 1 year of physics a prerequisite for all foods work.



The coeds of 1893 paraded around the campus in swishing long skirts. Pictured in the background is Old Main.

Progress

The Department of Domestic Science was transferred to the Division of Agriculture during the 1907-1910 administration of Mrs. Alice Dynes Feuling.



North Hall housed domestic economy in early years

By 1911 domestic science had grown so large that it needed a building of its own. Virgilia Purmort, '04, supervised the constructing and equipping of the \$75,000 red pressed brick structure, which is now the west wing of the present Home Economics Building under the disguise of a veneer of white granite. The first floor housed offices, classrooms and clothing laboratories. The second floor was utilized by food and art departments and also featured two dining rooms and a reception room.

Along with the new building came a new department head, Catherine MacKay. Home economics became a separate division in 1913 with Miss MacKay as acting dean. In 1914, her official title became Dean MacKay, a position she held until her death in 1921. During her term, enrollment more than doubled and the faculty members increased to 38. The first practice house in home management opened in downtown Ames during Miss MacKay's administration.

The first issue of *The Iowa Homemaker* appeared during Edna Walls' 1921-22 term as acting dean although Dean MacKay had assisted in planning for the home economics division magazine. The change from a semester to a quarter basis came in the same term.

Anna E. Richardson with her Charleston-bred Southern accent followed Miss MacKay as second dean of home economics. Hers was the job of overseeing planning and building the present white stone Home Economics Building.

During Dean Richardson's term, the second and third home management houses opened and the first babies came to live in them. In 1924 the nursery school was opened under experimental conditions. After a

year in a temporary frame building, it was moved to its present spot, a remodeled brick barn.

Genevieve Fisher returned to Iowa State to become the third dean of home economics after a year with Frances Sims as acting head of the division. Miss Fisher had been a member of the staff from 1914 to 1919.

By 1930, 1,325 women were studying in the eight home economics departments: Applied Art, Child Development, Foods and Nutrition, Institution Management, Textiles and Clothing, Home Management, Home Economics Education and Household Equipment. Women could also major in technical journalism under the guidance of the head of the Department of Home Management.

A new modern, well equipped building for the Department of Women's Physical Education was initiated in 1941. This department was added to the Division of Home Economics in 1913 and offers a minor in teaching physical education.

In the fall of 1944 Dr. P. Mabel Nelson became the fourth dean of home economics. A member of the faculty since 1923, she was formerly head of the Department of Foods and Nutrition.

Limited Residence Hall Space

Currently, 135 staff members are engaged in teaching and performing research projects. Limited space in women's residence halls has placed the maximum enrollment figure at 1,600 students.

To date 6,489 degrees have been awarded in home economics. All departments except physical education give a master of science degree. Four offer work leading to a doctor's degree: Foods and Nutrition, Household Equipment, Institution Management and Education, through the Department of Vocational Agriculture. Dr. Pearl Swanson coordinates all graduate work and is assistant director in charge of home economics research at the Agricultural Experiment Station.

Dean Nelson and the faculty are working to improve the quality of teaching by studying the objectives of courses and examination methods. Recently a trained counselor was added to the staff under a program of better guidance for students.



In contrast to the dark outfits of the women's battalion in 1893 are the uniforms now worn for work in the foods labs